1st Grade: Animal Investigator

Course Description: Over the course of four days, we will work with students to teach them about animal interactions and animal behavior by discussing different types of group behavior and communication between animals. We will also give students the opportunity to observe some live animals and make some observations on their own about the animal behavior before giving a final presentation to their classmates on one particular animal.

Day 1: Students will learn about insect interactions with each other, other animals, and plants – namely in the form of discussing food chains. We will talk about how all animals in an environment will interact either directly or indirectly. We will also introduce the students to plant and insect interactions and that there are beneficial and some that are pest insects by bringing in some examples to show students of each.
Demonstration: The class will play a game called Ant, Aphid, Ladybug in which the students will learn how these three insects interact directly, which are pests, and which are beneficial.

Day 2: Students will learn different methods of insect communication including: sounds, dances, scents, and light flashes. We will be bringing a selection of insects from the Insectarium so that we can go over the different ways that each of those organisms communicates. We will talk about how hissing cockroaches hiss, how crickets can chirp, how lightning bugs can flash, how bess beetles communicate with their young, and more.
Demonstration: We will play a communication game which will allow students to understand how difficult it is to communicate with each other without words. To demonstrate how individuals in a group might communicate with each other we will play the waggle dance game. Groups need to create a dance for movement instructions to tell each other how to find a flower. One student goes to find the flower and communicates to the next bee how to get there via dance

Day 3: Animals are often found in groups together because it increases their chances of survival. The groups can range from being very small to very large. We will talk about some of the behaviors that animals might exhibit in a group such as gathering food together, defending themselves, or raising young. We will then discuss some of the specific group behaviors we can see in the wild, including migrating birds, sentry Meerkats, and both ant and bee colonies.
Demonstration: We will have students play a game where we can look at how much easier it is to live in a group than to live alone. We will have students try to obtain everything they need to survive – food, shelter, water, and clothing – in a set amount of time by drawing all of the items in one minute. They will soon find that they cannot do all of those drawings in one minute. Then they will be paired into groups and the groups will be allowed to work together to collect all of the items they need. This will exhibit how much easier it is to survive in a group.

Day 4: This last class we will bring in a large assortment of critters and give a short description about the life history of each. Students will each select animals and then observe them to give a short report to the class.

Demonstration: Students will be given time to observe their selected animal and then they must describe what they observed to the class in relation to how it interacted with the other organisms in its enclosure, how it interacted with its environment, and anything else that the students observe and want to share.